

CR Draft 17 Response to Growth/Planning Issues

This response is to comments regarding population growth and planning issues and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. Comments regarding population growth and planning issues such as controlling urban sprawl, immigration and increased water demand, urged that they be given consideration in California water management and the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

It is correct that if trends in population growth continue, many areas in California face potential water shortages by 2020. The issue of population growth and the demands that new population places on natural resources are certainly relevant to the problems the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is facing. It is important to note that the Program is not charged with the mission of satisfying the state's future water needs; rather, the Program's mission is to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system. Accordingly, population growth management such as controlling the rate and location of housing development in California is beyond the mandate of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. Local and regional government entities—such as city councils, county boards of supervisors, city and county planning commissions, boards and departments, and regional planning agencies establish the policies that manage population growth-related development, controlling and managing population growth.

Resource planners have long debated the role of water in population growth. Water is an example of a resource that may be considered growth-inducing, since development of a region cannot occur without ample water supplies and supply reliability. However, a shortage of water resources in a region can be overcome by technology such as storage, transfer, and desalinization projects. Regional growth is therefore dependent, in part, on the cost of developing necessary resources in a region.

Growth-inducing impacts are the ways in which the proposed project could foster, either directly or indirectly, economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing in the surrounding environment. At the programmatic level, growth-inducing impacts on resources can only be described broadly. For the purposes of this Programmatic EIS/EIR, any increase in water supply or water supply reliability was assumed to be growth-inducing. Without additional specific information concerning the geographic area where increases in water supply or water supply reliability could occur, it is difficult to assess the impacts on any particular region. Such necessary specific information includes cost and availability of other water supplies or other factors that could induce or inhibit growth. Therefore, under NEPA and CEQA criteria, we must assume that the CALFED objective to improve water supply reliability could induce growth, with subsequent environmental consequences. By doing so, the PEIS/EIR presents the full range of possible environmental consequences related to the CALFED Program. Growth-inducing impacts will be analyzed in greater detail in future CEQA/NEPA documents that are tiered from this document. Please refer to Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the PEIS/EIR for more detailed discussions of potential growth-inducing impacts of Program actions.

While the Program has no authority over population growth, the Preferred Program Alternative contains components that will reduce the impact of an expanding population and development upon Bay-Delta resources. The Water Use Efficiency Program will increase water supply reliability by more efficient use and reuse of existing water supplies. This Program will allow cities and counties to stretch their

existing water supplies to service an expanding population through an increase in the exchange of water conservation and recycling technical information and by providing financial incentives to urban and agricultural water users. Similarly, the Water Transfer Program may increase some water supplies by better enabling water transfers between regions, allowing already developed water to be sold via a water market to expanding population centers. Through water quality improvements, the Water Quality Program may reduce demands for certain beneficial uses, thereby increasing the available water supply. Improvements from the Conveyance element may allow more water to be exported from the Delta while meeting in-Delta needs. Additional water supply achieved under the Storage element may be used for municipal, agricultural, and environmental purposes. Such measures will reduce, and perhaps preclude, the need for additional diversions of Bay-Delta water, thereby reducing the impacts of an expanding population upon the Bay-Delta system.

Please consult Chapter 1 of the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (PEIS/EIR), Project Description, for information concerning the objectives and purpose of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. Please see section 3.2 of the PEIS/EIR for a summary of potential growth-inducing impacts of Program actions. Please refer to Chapters 5, 6 and 7 for more detailed discussions of potential growth-inducing impacts of Program actions. For additional information, please see the Revised Phase II Report appendix to the PEIS/EIR.

Revised 11/9/99